



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **TEXAS EMPLOYMENT COMPANY INDICTED OVER FALSE IMMIGRATION VERIFICATION FORMS**

*Allegedly provided illegal workers to package MREs for combat troops*

McALLEN, Texas – A Texas corporation that provided temporary workers for a plant that packages combat meals for the military has been named in an indictment that it falsified employment eligibility forms to hire illegal alien workers.

United States Attorney Michael Shelby announced Thursday the unsealing of the federal indictment charging The Tollin Group Inc., doing business as Remedy Intelligent Staffing (Remedy) of conspiracy to falsify Employment Eligibility Verification Forms (I-9 forms) to conceal from the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force that it had illegally and unlawfully hired illegal aliens as employees to work for the Wornick Co., which is an assembler of the U.S. military's packaged food called MREs, or "Meals Ready to Eat."

"Companies that willfully violate our nation's immigration laws potentially trade long term security for short term profits," said Shelby. "While no direct link to terrorism has been discovered in this case, the undocumented worker is vulnerable to anyone who seeks to exploit his illegal status."

"We will continue to close the gaps that exist in our immigration system and vigorously pursue those that use fraudulent documents to expose vulnerabilities in our nation's security," said Alonzo Pena, special agent-in-charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's San Antonio Office.

The MRE is designed to sustain an individual engaged in heavy activity, such as military training or during actual military operations when normal food service and facilities are not available. The MRE is a totally self-contained operational ration consisting of a full meal packed in a flexible meal bag. The full bag is lightweight and fits easily in military field clothing pockets. Each meal contains a variety of food components.

In January 2003, DoD awarded Wornick a \$47.2 million MRE Delivery Order contract to produce and deliver more than 1.1 million MREs between February and May 2003, to support U.S. military

forces in Iraq as part of "Operation Iraqi Freedom." To fulfill its contractual obligations, the Wornick Company initiated an around-the-clock production cycle to assemble the MREs. To help them meet this new demand, Wornick contracted with Remedy for temporary MRE assemblers for a six-month period that started in February 2003.

The investigation conducted by the JTTF was initiated after receiving intelligence reports in March 2003, which lead law enforcement to believe that Wornick was a possible target of an Al Qaeda threat. The Department of Defense and the JTTF notified Wornick of the potential threat from this international terrorist organization. In response, Wornick issued a statement to its employees about the threat and the need for security and vigilance, and the JTTF immediately initiated an investigation focused upon a thorough background check of all Remedy employees working at Wornick.

The indictment alleges that Remedy knowingly hired foreign nationals illegally in the United States. Further, in March, unnamed co-conspirators acting on behalf of Remedy allegedly failed to properly examine and verify the accuracy of information contained in 329 of 600 I-9 forms submitted to the company by persons seeking and ultimately securing temporary employment at Wornick. The same three unnamed co-conspirators, acting on behalf of Remedy, are also alleged to have reproduced 414 I-9 forms for Remedy employees containing false and fraudulent entries and certifications between March 19, 2003 and June 2003. The Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) requires that an employer hire authorized aliens, verify each applicant's identity and work status, and maintain records on verification and hiring practices. Each false and fraudulent reproduction constitutes a violation of federal regulations and carries a maximum administrative penalty of \$1,000.

The indictment further alleges that on March 26, 2003, in response to a request from Wornick, Remedy forwarded the I-9 forms of 15 employees working at Wornick for inspection by the JTTF. With the assistance of agents of the Social Security Administration, agents determined that these forms contained false and fraudulent Social Security Numbers. Further investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents determined that many of the employees were illegally in the United States. If convicted of the conspiracy charge, Remedy faces a maximum fine of \$500,000 and up to five years probation.

Ten Remedy temporary employees, who worked at Wornick and were also indicted July 27, have been arrested, convicted of the misdemeanor offense of fraud in connection with the unlawful possession of a false social security number following guilty pleas, and have been sentenced to jail time ranging from 1 to 173 days. Those defendants are:

Eduardo Hinojosa, 32, true name Jorge Guajardo, a U. S. citizen from Donna, Texas;

Leslie Hernandez, 30, true name Sonia Erica Sarrizales-Cruz, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Donna, Texas;

Jose Gonzalez, 32, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Edinburg, Texas;

Flor Pintor, 21, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Donna, Texas;

Yamileth I. Pintor, 29, also known as Beatriz Pintor, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in San Juan, Texas;

Dora E. Oviedo, true name Maria Del Carmen Avalos-Puente, 42, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Pharr, Texas;

Francisco Granados, 28, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Mission, Texas; San Juanita Vidal, also known as San Juanita Carrillo, 34, an undocumented Mexican national who resided in Edinburg, Texas; and

Mark W. Head, 35, a Canadian national with resident-alien status in the United States who resided in Encino, Texas.

Those defendants illegally in the United States face administrative deportation proceedings upon completing their sentences.

Arnulfo Rodriguez, 30, also known as Juan Ramon Andrade Ruiz, a U.S. citizen from Mission, Texas, was charged with the felony offense of fraudulently using a Social Security Number, pleaded guilty Aug. 27. Rodriguez, who faces a maximum of five years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$250,000, is scheduled to be sentenced Nov. 8 by U.S. District Judge Randy Crane.

The indictment is the result of an investigation conducted by JTTF, and the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General with cooperation and assistance of the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Border Patrol and the Mission, Texas Police Department.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.*